

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION CHECKLIST

Project: Constructing Vernal Pools for Ecological Function: An Historical Study of Ten Vernal Pool Creation Project Sites in Northern Central Valley, CA

Date: July 30, 2009; rev. August 28, 2009

Nature of Action: Provide \$217,100 from the Central Valley Project Conservation Program to Vollmar Consulting to assess and characterize methods/approaches utilized for vernal pool creation/restoration; conduct field surveys; and develop a set of scientifically-based monitoring criteria best suited to evaluate ecological function for vernal pool creation and restoration projects. Species benefited: vernal pool fairy shrimp, tadpole shrimp, California tiger salamander, and slender orcutt grass.

Locations: see attached map and table.

Exclusion Category: B (2): Research activities, such as nondestructive data collection and analysis, monitoring, modeling, laboratory testing, calibration, and testing of instruments or procedures and non-manipulative field studies.

Evaluation of Criteria for Categorical Exclusion

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | This action or group of actions will have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain ___ Yes ___ |
| 2. | This action or group of actions will involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain ___ Yes ___ |
| 3. | This action will have significant adverse effects on public health or safety. | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain ___ Yes ___ |
| 4. | This action will have an adverse effect on unique geological features such as wetlands, wild or scenic rivers, rivers placed on the nationwide river inventory, refuges, | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain ___ Yes ___ |

floodplains, or prime or unique farmlands.

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 5. | This action will have highly controversial effects. | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain___ Yes___ |
| 6. | This action will have highly uncertain environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risk. | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain___ Yes___ |
| 7. | This action will establish a precedent for future actions. | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain___ Yes___ |
| 8. | This action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant environmental effects. | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain___ Yes___ |
| 9. | This action will adversely affect properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places. | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain___ Yes___ |
| 10. | This action will adversely affect a species listed or proposed to be listed as endangered or threatened. | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain___ Yes___
On June 29, 2009, Reclamation initiated informal consultation with the Service on the activities for projects in the CVPCP and the HRP for Fiscal Year 2009. The Service concurred on September 28, 2009 that the projects, including this study, are not likely to adversely affect listed species. |
| 11. | This action threatens to violate Federal, state, local, executive or Secretarial orders, or tribal law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment. | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain___ Yes___ |
| 12. | This action will affect Indian Trust Assets. | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uncertain___ Yes___ |

13. This action will have a disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on low income or minority populations. No ☒ Uncertain ☐ Yes ☐
14. This action will limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites. No ☒ Uncertain ☐ Yes ☐
15. This action will contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species. No ☒ Uncertain ☐ Yes ☐

NEPA Action: Categorical Exclusion ☒ EA ☐ EIS ☐

Environmental commitments, explanation, and/or remarks:

The proposed study will assess the long and short-term success of created and restored vernal pools on ten project sites in the northern Central Valley (Sacramento Valley), California. A total of 500 pools (an average of 25 created/restored and 25 reference pools per project site) will be studied to determine the design, construction, and monitoring methods and approaches utilized over the past 19 years that have produced the most ecologically functional vernal pools. Figure 1 shows the locations. The table describes each location.

Past studies and experts agree that vernal pool restoration and creation projects are largely implemented and monitored in an inconsistent and insufficient manner and that certain restoration approaches simply do not work. This study will be the first of its kind to review a statistically valid number of creation and restoration projects over both the short-term (the required five year monitoring window) and the long-term (up to 20 years post-implementation), and to draw conclusions on the efficacy of various design, construction and monitoring methods.

The study will develop a set of recommended design and construction approaches and a set of scientifically-based monitoring methods and criteria for a variety of vernal pool types (i.e., different geology, soil type, hydrology, floristic classification). These recommendations,

submitted to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as a peer-reviewed research study report, will directly improve the success of vernal pool creation and restoration efforts and contribute to the conservation of endangered/threatened branchiopod, amphibian and plant species.

Preparer's Name and Title: Douglas Kleinsmith
Douglas Kleinsmith
Environmental Specialist

Date: 10/5/09

Regional Archeologist concurrence with Item 9: See attachment

ITA Designee concurrence with Item 12: See attachment

Concurrence:

Rosmary Stefan Date: 10/6/09
Acting Program Manager, Central Valley Project
Conservation Program

Approved:

Marsha Leigh Date: 10/7/09
Acting Regional Environmental Officer

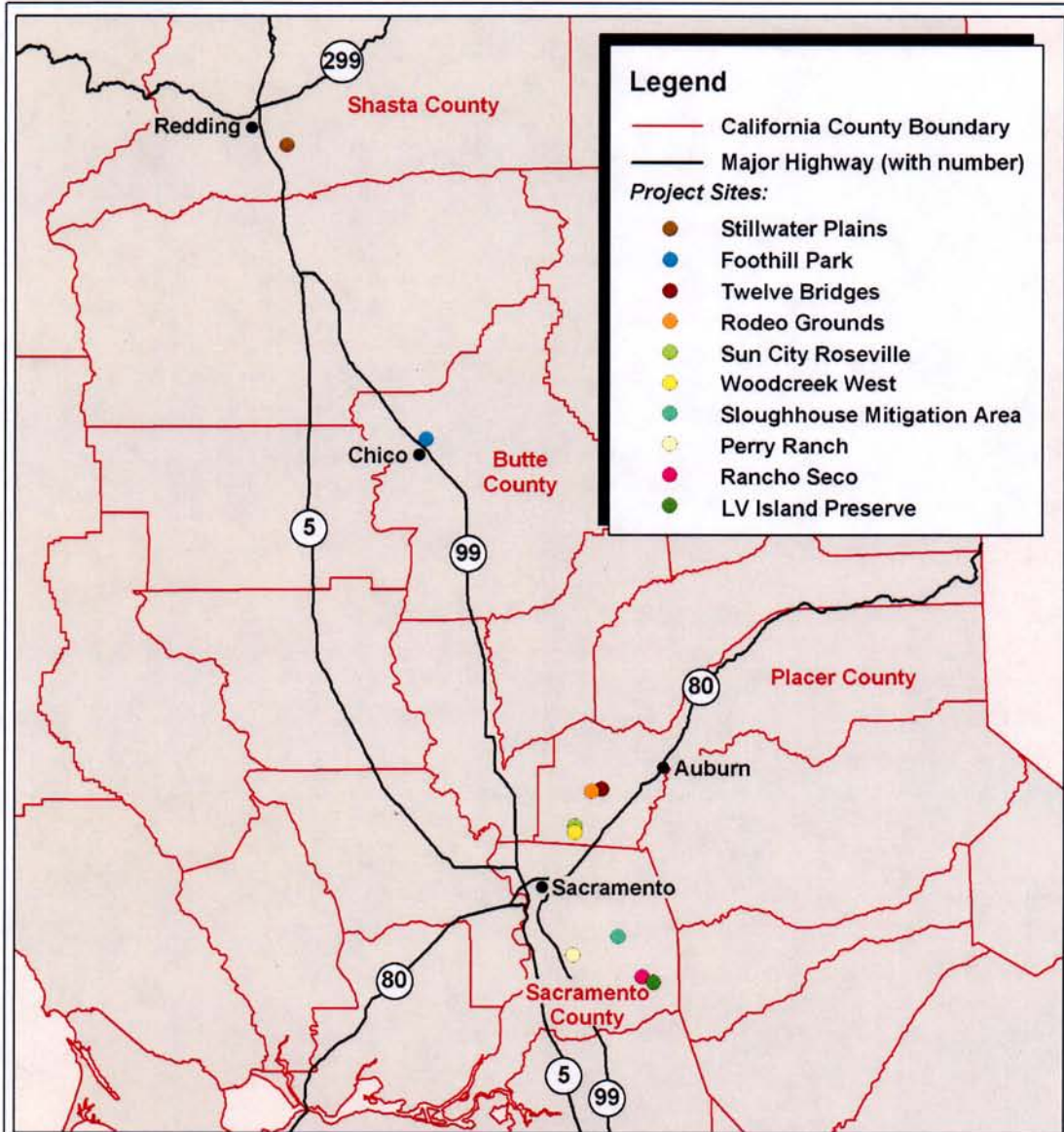


FIGURE 1
Proposed Study Area
with
Ten Vernal Pool Creation Projects
 Sacramento Valley, California

1:1,584,000

1 inch equals 25 miles
 at letter size layout

0 5 10 20
 Miles

0 10 20 40
 Kilometers



Data Sources

Gap Analysis Project 1998

Vollmar Consulting 2008

GIS/Cartography by Rebecca Wayman, November 2008

Map File: 136_CVPIA_VP-Creation-Study_L-P_2008-1113.mxd



[illegible]

From: Nickels, Adam M
Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2009 1:02 PM
To: Kleinsmith, Douglas H
Cc: Thomson, John G; Stefani, Rosemary A; Barnes, Amy J; Bruce, Brandee E; Connolly, Jonathan D; Leigh, Anastasia T; Overly, Stephen A
Subject:

Project No. 09-CCAO-302

Doug:

The proposed undertaking to provide \$217,100.00 from the Central Valley Project conservation Program to Vollmar Consulting to assess and characterized methods/approaches utilized for vernal pool creation/restoration; develop a set of criteria best suited to evaluate ecological function for vernal pool creation and restoration projects has no potential to affect historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1).

The proposed actions involve the development of evaluation criteria for evaluating the success of created Vernal Pools. The study is administrative in nature and will help in measuring success of engineered vernal pools.

I concur with line 9 of the CEC for Constructing Vernal Pools for Ecological Function: An Historical Study of Ten Vernal Pool Creation Project Sites in Northern Central Valley, CA - Dated July 30, 2009.

Location: Northern California

Exclusion: B(2)

This concludes the Section 106 process

Sincerely,

Adam M. Nickels, M.S.
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From: Rivera, Patricia L
Sent: Monday, August 17, 2009 2:00 PM
To: Kleinsmith, Douglas H
Subject: RE: ITA Requests for first 3 CVPCP projects for 2009

Doug,

I reviewed the proposed action to provide \$217,100 from the Central Valley Project Conservation Program to Vollmar Consulting to assess and characterize methods/approaches utilized for vernal pool creation/restoration; develop a set of scientifically-based monitoring criteria best suited to evaluate ecological function for vernal pool creation and restoration projects. Species benefited: vernal pool fairy shrimp, tadpole shrimp, California tiger salamander, and slender orcutt grass.

The proposed action does not affect Indian Trust Assets. The nearest ITA to the proposed site is approximately .9 miles E and it is the Auburn Rancheria.

Patricia